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Jan 14th 1828

An

Paper N. 9. 1828

Inaugural Essay
on the

Altered condition

of the

Tongue

in

Disease

by

Frederick Horner of Va.

Jan: 14th 1828

1871. 12. 12.

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Whilst a resident pupil in the
Alms-house of this city the ensu-
ing remarks, for the most part, on the
appearances of the tongue were made
and are now thrown together being
copied from my note book or jour-
nal of cases.

It is very questionable whether the
tongue be at all affected in those dis-
eases in which the mucous tissues
are not implicated primarily or se-
condarily; it is frequently seen in
inflammations of the Serous Mem-
branes that it undergoes little or no
change when the former are uncon-
cerned, as in simple Mania and other
affections. The Stomach possessing
as however, so wide a field of Sym-

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pathies that few diseases occur
where it does not more or less become
affected and what hitherto has been
deemed a symptom of the original,
has only been in truth an effect of a
consecutive mischief. The membrane
forming the covering of the tongue and
that lining the internal surface of
the alimentary Canal being continuous
and of similar structure: it is rea-
sonable to infer that when any one
of the viscera between which this is
the connecting medium, is diseased,
the aspect of the tongue presents an
important guide in forming an opin-
ion of the existence, extent and char-
acter of the affection: Ulcers may
exist in one or more of the viscera;
and may appear either in an acute

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or chronic form, in which order the
appearance of the tongue will be
considered. This organ may as-
sume a variety of aspects during the
existence of disease: its natural red
colour may be exchanged for one still
more deep, it may become dark, brown
and even black - wholly or partially -
its centre and base, or either may be
of these hues usually, while its margins
and apex are of a bright red: it may
be increased or diminished in size - alter-
ed in structure or shape: its papillae
enlarged or diminished: their colour
and elevation heightened or lessened:
the papillae have been deemed pecu-
liarly indicative of the state of the villi
of the mucous membrane which are
so often the unsuspected seats of disease.

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In cases of slight irritation of the
Stomach arising either from an ex-
cess in quantity of ingesta or in qual-
ity of the articles received into it and
applied directly to its mucous surface
the tongue is covered with a light thin
dewy and white coating: which may
be confined to the centre or base or not
if the irritating cause be repeated and
continued for any length of time, the
fur becomes much thickened and as-
sumes a darker hue: should it be con-
sisted farther still, phlogosis ensues:
its advance is faithfully marked by
the condition of the tongue, which now
becomes enlarged, indented on the
edges by contact with the teeth: now
and then natural on the edges and tip
more reddish especially at the base and

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centre, with there an often nausea
sore eructations and fatid breath
Emetics have here been recommended
and should the irritation be not just
may be highly beneficial by inducing
an action of the Reflex of the Stomach
surmounting that previously existing:
thereby altering their secretions upon
which may depend the disordered
condition of that Viscus as indicated
by the tongue: should however the point
of irritation supersede the one referred
to, and much phlogosis be present
Known generally by pricking the Epigas-
trum, the nausea and frequent incli-
nation to vomit - they only tend to
aggravate and increase the gastric dis-
turb - the tongue here does not desert
its post, but like a watchful sentinel

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points out the progress of the irradia-
tion: its colour becomes of a still more
decided red which is now general
the white mucous coating is dimin-
ished: the papilla more elevated and
pointed and in proportion to the inten-
sity of the inflammation is the organ
attended: a bright scarlet colour in-
dicates an active state of inflamma-
tion, this is commonly seen in the Stom-
achs of drunkards and those guilty
of great excess: In Mania a potus
which originates in inordinate stimu-
lation of the stomach &c. followed by
subsequent absorption of nervous ener-
gy: the tongue is of a bright scarlet
thin, polished and pointed and
very tremulous, inability in many in-
stances to protrude it: dissection shows

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the most unequivocal signs of inflammation - the vessels of the Stomach much distended and innumerable stars or dots of red vessels over the whole surface of the Mucous Membrane almost inducing a belief at a little distance that blood had been smeared over it: the coat itself collected into rugae - traversing the surface transversely; in some instances the size of the viscus much diminished, in others increased: the parietes thickened or very thin the diaphragm scarcely ever fails to present some or all of these appearances -

When gastric disorder has existed for a considerable time and the small intestines have become involved - the tongue is less red than before but very

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much loaded - it may be proper
to remark that much difference pre-
vails between the terms loaded and
furrowed: the first implies its being
covered with a thick, tenacious or mat-
ty mucus generally of a white colour
but often brown and of a soapy consis-
tence: the latter has soft, long thick
set villi, resembling velvet as if grow-
ing out of the surface of the ~~tangue~~ ^{tongue}
the former is at first moist and be-
longs more particularly to affections of
the stomach: while the latter may be
either moist or dry - or is found when
both the stomach and intestines are
concerned: both are met with in
most of the summer and autumnal
fevers - arising from marsh exhalations
and it is well known how much the

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Primal fire are implicated; at first
 when much irritability of Stomach,
 heat of Skin excited Pulse &c, exist
 the tongue is dry, loaded and white
 after several accessions of the hot stage
 it becomes brown and dry, during
 the sweating; moist and soft, but the
 brown coat continues, after appropriate
 remedial measures have been taken
 and gastric disturb. subdued: it clears
 on the edges and tip - A perspirable
 state of the skin seems very propitious
 in altering the condition of the tongue
 owing to the great reciprocity of ac-
 tion between the mucous and dermoid
 figures - thus when we have great heat
 of the surface and mild soothing
 remedies are applied by means of
 the stomach and rectum as well as

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the skin itself - the first sign of an abatement of the symptoms will be an alteration in the aspect of the tongue - which from being dry and parched, becomes moist and soft.

The use of Cathartics in the treatment of these affections has been so indiscriminate hitherto that little attention seems to have been paid to their immediate operation on the alimentary canal and indeed from several cases which have come under my own observation - I must conclude that their exhibition has in many instances tended to aggravate rather than check the disease - this has been clearly indicated by the alteration in the aspect of the tongue and if this as has been ascertained is such a diagnostic as

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may be relied on in inflammation of
this tissue - it is clear that instead of
lessening the degree or destroying ~~the~~
altogether the existing disease, they
only assist and establish it more firmly

A gentleman who felt unwell - had
some little fever, uneasiness of stomach
tongue somewhat white and coated -
took a pill of Calomel and Scammony
it operated both by Catharsis and Em-
sis and left him with most intense
pain of stomach with much nausea &c
extreme pain or pricking of the Epigast-
rium - tongue red and polished, much
general disturbance - intense fever for
several successive days - he was con-
fined to lemonade alone as drink,
an occasional dose of Sal. Epsom. un-
der this treatment he recovered in a few days

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Another case occurred to me in the
 Alms house. The patient had slight
 Rheumatic pains in ^{his} legs and arms - he
 took a small dose of Colchicum - at
 night a Dover's pulv - the former purged
 most actively the over night: I found
 him next morning in extreme pain -
 much general distress, agitation and
 anxiety of countenance - intense pain
 on pressing epigastrium and abdomen
 pulse much excited - quick and irri-
 tated - head-ache - at times with dizzy-
 ness - skin hot, dry and harsh - tongue
scarlet especially at the edges and tip
 and very dry - none of which sympt-
 oms existed before he took the Medi-
 cine - Now ordered him to be leeches
 over the stomach - cold demulcent
 drinks - cold flax seed mucilaginous

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Ememata and fomentations to abdomen
he was couralescent in three days,
tongue clean, moist and natural;
Other cases illustrative of the same thing
might be adduced did the occasion
warrant it.

When the active stage of inflammation shall have passed off - symptoms of irritation may linger and now are more decided than those presented by the tongue: they are however very various in character and degree - in slight cases there is a thin, white fur in the centre or a thick dark patch on the base and root - the edges clean and often red: its size and shape undergo an alteration - the surface is flat and broad - edges thick narrow and rounded - apex very pointed - the surface -

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frequently of a dull red or mottled
colour, with a slight coat of fur - some-
times of a scabrous aspect - longitudi-
nal and transverse superficial furrows
then occur most commonly when there
is but a slight remnant of disease:
digestion not being so vigorous as it
might be - or when certain articles of
food induce oppression and a sense of
weight and distension: these are remo-
ved most effectually by a close adhe-
rence to regimen and derregulation
of diet: a contracted, shrivelled and
pointed tongue, dry and smooth - white
and almost bloodless - is an alarming
symptom occurring in protracted affec-
tions of the large intestines - in our case
of Chronic Colonic which I have seen
it occurred and post mortem inspection

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showed ulcerations in the colon lay-
ing bare the muscular coat. Sometimes
a smooth shining pellicle forms on the
surface of the tongue which in a few
days becomes crisp - cracks and peels
off, leaving a smooth, clean, dry surface
of a bright scarlet colour: this frequently
attends the most obstinate kinds
of diarrhoea occurring in protracted
cases of fever &c. in dysentery in the
advanced stages the tongue becomes
brown or black - dry and thickly en-
crusted in its centre - deep fissures in
its surface - its margins of a bright
red - appearing at other times as if
meal had been sprinkled over it or
that milk had been drunk - the fur
in the centre is of a triangular shape
a dark strip is sometimes seen extend

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ing down the centre from base to tip
which continues till death takes place
The black colour seems to depend al-
together on the drying process: as it is
seldom that we see a black moist
surface: this thickly matted coat
of black fur may easily be man-
aged off— In denying that
the tongue forms a diagnostic in the
affections of the serous tissues I may
mention that in Phrenitis and Hydro-
cephalus it is invariably clean and
natural—some few cases to the con-
trary may happen, it is true—but in
these much gastric and intestinal
derangement exists: the same remark
applies to Pleurisy &c— In Phthisis
and hectic fever fur have not remark-
ed the florid, polished and perfectly

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clean aspect of the tongue. continuing
so until the close of the attack when
the digestion is so apt to become im-
paired and the patient ~~too~~ harassed
by irritability and nausea of stomach
to such a degree as to forbid any food
being received into it.

In peritoneal inflammation, in peri-
carditis &c &c the same remarks
are applicable.

The